

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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HALVES.

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CHAPTER IV. A REVELATION.

OUR little dinner at the Rectory, though perfectly satisfactory in its material details, could scarcely be said to be a success in a social point of view. It certainly did not bring the two families into closer connection with one another. At breakfast next morning my aunt pronounced Mrs. Raeburn to be a monstrosity, from which term, either in the way of mitigation or explanation, she was not to be moved an inch. As for John, she had read of such young persons in books, but had always thought them too hateful to have a real existence. Of Mr. Raeburn, she could only say in his favour that he was not a whit more vulgar than she had expected him to be. She allowed, however, as to the men, that they were the victims of circumstances. "When Harry becomes an attorney, he will doubtless grow like the father, and if he had not gone to college"—this had always been a strong point with my aunt, and, indeed, it was to her views upon the matter that I owed my university career—"he would now be like the son. There must be attorneys"—this in answer to a mild observation of my uncle's to that effect—"quite true, my dear, though it is much to be regretted; and there must also always be young men who are not brought up at Oxford or Cambridge; but they have no business in society, and if they are found there, ought to be removed—or at all events avoided."

So she disposed of the whole family;

and when I questioned her about Gertrude, she clashed her rings together with a little shriek of despair.

"My dear boy, don't speak of her. I couldn't help playing into your hands last evening, because I like to see young people happy, and the impulse of the moment overpowered me. She is charming, modest, beautiful—anything and everything you please; but there is an insuperable obstacle to my contemplating her as the future Mrs. Sheddon. You must dismiss her from your mind, once and for all, Harry."

"Why?"

"How can you ask me why? She is Mr. Raeburn's cousin, and if you suppose that I will ever submit to be connected with that family, you don't know your Aunt Eleanor."

My uncle's views respecting our guests were, as usual, of a much less decisive kind. Mrs. Raeburn was, indeed, he confessed, "a gorgon." "But what does it matter, my dear? There are two toll-gates between here and Kirkdale, and she will never call." As for the attorney, though the rector had had no intimacy with him for years—their business relations in the meantime, however, being continuous—he had known him when they were lads together, and was not inclined to pass any severe judgment on so old an acquaintance. His good nature saw nothing particularly objectionable in John, whom indeed that escapade with the preserve-cupboard had, I think, rather endeared to him. "He's a pleasant young fellow enough, if he wouldn't whistle at table."

"And what do you think of Miss Floyd?" asked my aunt, whose conversation with me upon that subject had

occurred, before my uncle had made his appearance at the breakfast-table.

"Well, 'pon my life," answered the rector, laughing, "I think what Harry thinks. She has money too, you sly dog," added he, approvingly; "ten thousand pounds of her own, as Mark informed me, in a most unusual fit of confidence. I never saw him so communicative as he was last night. A strange story that he told about himself and his brother Alexander, was it not?"

"Very," observed my aunt contemptuously, to whom the narrative had doubtless been already communicated above stairs; "very strange if true; though to believe that your friend the attorney ever acted on an affectionate impulse is out of my power."

In spite of these unfavourable sentiments respecting the Raeburn family, the arrangements respecting my residing with them had of course to be carried out, and I migrated from Stanbrook to Kirkdale that very day.

My reception at the Priory was by no means enthusiastic. Mrs. Raeburn had, I fancy, been no better pleased with her visit to the Rectory than her host and hostess had been to see her there, for she never even so much as asked after them; while the attorney himself was far from cordial. Either from the sense that my premium was secure, and that there was no further need to make himself agreeable, or (which I think more probable) from the consciousness of having somewhat committed himself before me the previous evening, his manner was reserved and formal; he wasted no time in hospitable courtesies, but at once proceeded to introduce me to my duties, the sphere of which was of course his office. This was a spacious apartment, built out from the dining-room, and furnished with two monstrous desks and one nondescript article of furniture with curious legs, which served the same purpose, though it more resembled a pulpit. I had heard of persons being "sold up" by the lawyers, and it struck me that this might be the rostrum from which their goods were knocked down to the public.

"What is that?" inquired I.

"Why a desk, of course; John's desk: he likes it high."

The fact being, as I afterwards discovered, that it was an old "upright grand" piano, long past service, which Mrs. Raeburn had caused to assume this

questionable shape, to avoid the necessity of procuring a new desk on my arrival. Many a time did John play on it, as though the keys had still been there, choice airs of his own composing. Many a sermon did he preach from it, in imitation of the Rev. John Merrick, Vicar of Kirkdale; and many a time, in the character of the local auctioneer, did he dispose of the title-deeds of his father's clients to an imaginary audience, at exceedingly low figures. The walls were lined with shelves, on which reposed tin boxes, each containing some precious parchment, labelled without, Kirkdale-Manor Trust; Hawley Estate; Lord Belcombe's Deeds, &c.

"Why, you have everybody in the county for your clients, Mr. Raeburn," said I.

"Well, pretty near all the good names, sir. There's your uncle Ralph's, you see. His father, the late rector, did business with my father, and I hope his nephew and my son will be equally good friends. Yes, yes, for a mere local lawyer, he will have a tolerable practice, I flatter myself." The mention of my uncle's name seemed to have mellowed the attorney.

"What is that box with West Indies on it?" asked I; "they are not in the county."

"Well, John calls it 'Hot Pickles,'" replied Mr. Raeburn, with a grim smile; "for the fact is, it is rather a warm subject. There lie my wife's titles to her West India estates, which are no longer in existence. If you want to air your legal knowledge in this house, never choose the Emancipation Act as your topic. You are looking at Miss Floyd's box; and that reminds me that you rather 'put out' my wife last night, by your marked attention to Gertrude; and the poor girl caught it in consequence. Of course it was but natural on your part; but, in future, you must be more careful. Perhaps it will be better to let you know at once that she is engaged to John."

Here was a fiasco! Three hundred guineas paid out of my very moderate fortune, and three years' imprisonment before me in the Briary—besides the adoption of a profession for which, to say the least of it, I had no sort of liking—and all for nothing. If the attorney had taken down the large county map that hung over the fireplace, and knocked me down with the rollers, I could not have been more astonished, or more prostrated.

"Gertrude is my ward," he continued, "and my veto as to the disposal of her hand, while a minor, would have been absolute; but though they were cousins—which Mrs. Raeburn thought an objectionable circumstance—I had not the heart to refuse the young folks."

"Then their marriage is to take place immediately?" observed I, with as much indifference as I could assume.

"Well, no, there is no hurry; some time within the next three years."

A gleam of hope illumined my inward gloom. Within three years her judgment would have matured, and she might change her mind. The idea of that lovely and graceful girl, who could appreciate true poetry, becoming the wife of John Raeburn, was too terrible to contemplate; but, then, what shocking contrasts matrimony did afford. The head of my college, a septuagenarian, had married a girl of seventeen, who had been the cynosure of all our eyes in chapel.

Mr. Raeburn's disclosure had taken me so utterly by surprise, for the moment, that I did not question its authenticity. Stunned and cast down, I listened with heedless ears to his details of my future office work and office hours; but when at last he concluded them, and had shown me my own apartment, and left me there, and I sat down to contemplate my catastrophe at leisure, some uncertain lights broke in upon me.

It might, of course, have been the embarrassment of the topic itself that had caused him to avert his eyes from me while speaking of it; to play with the ruler; to use a tone of marked emphasis that contrasted strangely with his nervous manner; but it might also have been that he was not speaking the truth—or, at all events, speaking something more than the truth. I could not believe, upon a reviewal of what had passed between Gertrude and myself, that she was actually engaged to John Raeburn. No word of love, it is true, had been exchanged between us, or had, even on my part, been actually expressed; yet she could scarcely have been mistaken as to the nature of my attentions, and these she had undoubtedly encouraged. The thought that she had been playing into the attorney's hands, merely to insure my becoming his articulated clerk, flushed my cheek with shame for having entertained it even for an instant, and was dismissed at once and for ever. No; whatever arts had been used in that

procedure, she at least was guiltless of them, though she might have been the innocent instrument of others. Perhaps Mr. Raeburn thought to pocket my three hundred guineas, and at the same time rid himself of an unwelcome pupil, by this unlooked-for revelation. In that case I would show him that I was tenacious of my rights, resolute to have my money's worth, and so far evidence a capacity for my new calling; I would not be starved out of my present quarters, though Mrs. Raeburn should diet me on home-made wine and periwinkles; and, above all, I would seek an early opportunity of hearing from Miss Floyd's own lips whether her guardian had told the truth or lies.

In the drawing-room I found the whole family assembled, awaiting the announcement of dinner, which was at the Briary a movable feast, varying with the seasons; being in summer time at the fashionable hour of seven, in the autumn at six and five, and in the winter at three, the object of which complicated arrangement was to avoid the necessity and consequent expense of dining by candle-light. Miss Floyd rose to meet me with a quiet smile and the very faintest change of colour; if her manner was not absolutely cordial, it was as much so as, considering the presence in which we stood, it could have been expected to be; and when I pressed her hand, the pressure—and I watched for it as a doctor watches for a beat of pulse—was perceptibly returned. It might have been but as a sign of welcome, though even so I should have been thankful for it; but my heart, which had been low and cold, leaped up at that touch, like flame from ashes, taking it as a more tender token. Her speech was gentle as usual, but quite unembarrassed; so that of one of two things I felt convinced—either Mrs. Raeburn had not rebuked her for my conduct of the previous evening, in which case her husband had told me an untruth; or if she had, that it had had no effect upon her. Of the two, I inclined to the latter opinion, for I knew that Gertrude had a spirit of her own that would resist unjustifiable censure, while the fact of her pecuniary independence placed her out of the reach of absolute harshness. To her servants, to her husband, to every one over whom she could exercise supremacy, Mrs. Raeburn's manner was dictatorial; to her equals, or those she fancied to be her equals, it was morose and taciturn; but to Gertrude she was always

patronisingly civil. She did not, indeed, call her "Gerty," as John Raeburn did, but she termed her "cousin"—which, as a matter of fact, she was not—and in the morning and at night she applied that gash between her chin and nose to Miss Floyd's cheek (like a pike smelling at a water-lily) in motherly salutation.

It devolved on me, of course, to take Mrs. Raeburn into dinner, her husband followed with Gertrude, and behind came John, with a mincing gait, in supposed imitation of the ladies, which turned the servant girl in waiting purple with suppressed mirth. To my chagrin, I was placed by myself at Mrs. Raeburn's right hand, while Gertrude sat opposite with John. This, however, I reflected, was no less than what was to be expected from Mr. Raeburn's announcement, whether true or not; and certainly my vis-à-vis did not conduct themselves, at least to my thinking, as engaged persons. If a single covert glance had been exchanged between them; if their hands had strayed together for one instant below the table-cloth; if, with a stolid glance at his father's picture on the wall, John had even ventured to press her fairy foot with his own—I should without doubt have been cognisant of it, so strict was my watch upon them; but none of these significant events occurred. They seemed on intimate terms indeed, but only such as might be looked for in the case of two young people living under the same roof, and related—although, indeed, but distantly—to one another.

Our dinner had one merit—it was not pretensions. There were two small soles, which being set before my hostess, I offered to carve, a proposition which to my great satisfaction she declined. It required a mathematical genius to divide them into five portions, and yet leave a fragment on the dish. There was a boiled scrag-end of mutton, which was a dire cause of discomposure to me, since it naturally suggested caper sauce; and when I asked for it, there was none. "Cook has forgotten it, I'm afraid," said my host, apologetically. "The cook has done nothing of the kind," was his wife's stern rejoinder. "In this house, Mr. Sheddon, though I trust you will find everything good and wholesome of its kind, you will find no luxuries. We avoid them upon principle. Some people, for instance, indulge in a profusion of foreign liquors; now, in my opinion, the manufactures of our own country should

be encouraged, rather than those of France or Spain; so, although there is sherry, for those to whom a vicious custom has rendered it necessary"—here she shot a glance at the attorney—"it is our usual custom to drink raisin or ginger wine." Having had experience of the sherry, my own opinion was that the charge of foreign manufacture could scarcely be laid against it; but, nevertheless, I took Mrs. Raeburn's hint, and a glass of ginger wine.

Anything more objectionable I did not remember to have put in my mouth, since I had been a school-boy; and I suppose the expression of my countenance betrayed the fact, for she added hastily, "It is a most excellent stomachic."

At this, John Raeburn, who was in the act of taking a dose of it himself, was seized with an irresistible fit of laughter.

It was necessary, of course, to swallow this admirable tonic remedy before its beneficial attributes could take effect upon the human system. In John's case, this preliminary operation had not been completed, and for some minutes I thought he would have been choked.

"It went the wrong way," observed Mrs. Raeburn, either in explanation of this catastrophe, or as an apology for her wine.

"If it went the right way," muttered the attorney, gloomily, "it should go into the hog-tub, every bottle of it."

The observation was a partially just one; but "By what an atmosphere," thought I, with indignation, "of vulgarity and meanness is yon angelic creature surrounded in this house!"

I felt like some heroic young seaman to whom a "cutting out" expedition has been for the first time intrusted; and from under the frowning battery of Mrs. Raeburn's guns I swore to myself to rescue the charming Gertrude, to haul down her cousin's colours (if indeed she wore them) from the mast, and to substitute in place of them my own. I was not so sanguine, or so venturesome, as to think of asking her for the present whether I possessed her love; but I was resolved to know, that very evening, in what position she really stood with relation to John Raeburn, that I might shape my course accordingly.

CHAPTER V. AN ARRIVAL.

OUR sordid meal did not occupy much time; nor was there any great temptation to linger over the plate of biscuits—"mixed," said the hostess, but, in fact,

consisting of five small abernethys and one infinitesimal macaroon—which, with some mystic preserve, the basis of which seemed to be damaged damsons, formed the dessert. After one more glass of ginger wine, to which she must have assimilated her constitution, for it never did her any harm, Mrs. Raeburn thawed a smile at Gertrude, then froze again with dignity, and carried my charmer away with her into the drawing-room.

"John, bring the brandy," was the ejaculation uttered by the attorney, as the door closed upon his wife's majestic figure. "Your mother may call that wine of hers a stomachic, but I pronounce it stomach ache. I am sure Sheddon must be suffering tortures."

John instantly dived into the office and produced a decanter of what looked like sherry, and of which his father insisted upon my partaking, under the transparent pretence that it had been sent for upon my account. The occurrence was evidently an habitual one, and when he had helped himself to a bumper, the host—for fear, as I concluded, of a sudden inroad from his better half—placed the bottle on the carpet beside his chair, as though it had been champagne in ice. Every hour that I had been at the Priory seemed to present some painful illustration of the character of one or other of its inmates.

My host was a drunkard, my hostess a screw, John a clown, only Gertrude was tender and true,

was the verdict my experience passed upon my new acquaintances, and which my habit of verse-making cast into the above poetic form. I had plenty of leisure, both for reflection and composition, for Mr. Raeburn and his son began to talk over the business transactions of the day, which had no interest for me even when intelligible—how Farmer Dod had called about renewing his lease, and how Lord Belcombe's steward had objected; how Gaffer Gurdon's will, which he had insisted on making himself, would not prove very profitable to his niece, by the time the law had done with it; and how the superintendent of the borough police had been "squared" by the landlord of the Dove with Two Heads.

Through the monotonous buzz of their talk, which, together with the effects of the unaccustomed glass of brandy, was fast lulling me to slumber, my ear suddenly caught the sound of wheels. The house stood quite apart by itself, with only

a private road leading to it from the town, so that if any vehicle were coming that way it must needs be to the Priory. Any visitor would be welcome to me, as not only putting a stop to the present conversation, which seemed interminable, but as enabling me to escape to the drawing-room. I listened, however, to the rumble of the wheels upon the hard road; to the click of the entrance gate; and then to the craunch upon the gravel, with an interest that could scarcely have been warranted by such considerations. I seemed to have an odd presentiment that something of importance was about to happen.

"I hear a gig," remarked John, presently.

"Nay," said I, to whom the sound was by this time quite familiar, "it is a four-wheeler of some sort."

"It is the brandy that makes you hear double," rejoined John, with his odious titter, which had this time a touch of malice in it, perhaps because his father had not offered him a glass. The old man knew too well the bitterness of the fruit of that tree of knowledge, to offer it to his only son; and perhaps even foresaw a time wherein, even though he were yet alive, there should be but one head left to manage affairs the intricacy of which needed careful steering.

"It has passed the office-door and is coming to the house. What a fool that little Jerry is! he is always making some mistake," said Mr. Raeburn, peevishly. "They should put some other man at the station."

"It isn't Jerry driving," answered John, who had risen, and was looking out of window. "It's a dog."

"A dog? You must be drunk, John!" exclaimed his father, rising also, but not without some difficulty.

As we all three stood at the window, we beheld this portent. A railway fly, with such an enormous bull-dog sitting on its front seat, that he absolutely concealed the driver (who was, however, but of very small dimensions) on the other side of him. Above the fly were some nondescript and shapeless articles of luggage, made of some wild animal's hide, with the hair outside (afterwards found to be a bison's). Within the fly, and looking out of its window, from which it nodded to us with an air of familiar recognition, was a very large scarlet bird, which, from the height at which it stood, might have been an ibis, but it had a parrot's beak.

"What the dence is it?" murmured the attorney. There was positive apprehension in his tone, which in his case too might well have been presentiment, but which I believe to have been caused by the suspicion that his vision was playing him false; that the Nemesis of delirium tremens, of which he stood in fear, had already overtaken him.

"It's a menagerie," replied John, quietly. "They think you are the mayor this year, instead of Wilmot, and are come to ask permission to exhibit in the Town Hall. There's the proprietor—that fellow with the white beard and the straw hat—and he has probably got a Bengal tiger under his seat."

The man alluded to had left the vehicle, and was standing at the front door, with the bird upon his wrist, whilst the driver, evidently in abject terror of the bull-dog, was cautiously taking down the luggage.

"Who can it be?" reiterated the attorney, with a tremor in his voice even more perceptible than before.

"It is Robinson Crusoe, father," answered John, with imperturbable gravity. "His man Friday is to arrive by the next train, and they are come to stop with us over Christmas."

It was clear indeed that the visitor was not making an afternoon call, but intended to stay the night at all events. A considerable number of "effects" had been by this time taken out of the fly: a large brass cage, probably the residence of the parrot; two small deal boxes with slits in them, as though to hold money for some charitable institution; two or three packages, looking like the offspring of the larger ones, and equally shapeless and hairy; and an enormous umbrella.

"I thought so," ejaculated John, as this last article made its appearance; "you will soon see his two guns and his tame goat."

But at that moment the front door opened, and the owner of all these wonderful properties disappeared within the house. There was a tumult of voices in the hall; the chatter of the parrot; the growl of the dog; and a shriek from the maid-servant, who presently came flying into the room, with—

"Please, sir, a gentleman wants to see you."

"What about? What does he want?" inquired the attorney, looking very pale and embarrassed.

"I am sure I don't know, sir; he has a lot of birds, and beastesses, and serpents,"

added she, with terrified emphasis. "But missis has gone out to him."

It was plain that, in the maid's opinion, there was no man, nor beast, nor creeping thing, for whom her mistress was not fully a match; and yet we could now hear Mrs. Raeburn's voice, pitched many degrees lower than her usual tone.

"In that case, you had better see my husband at once, sir," she was saying, and the next moment the door opened and she entered, followed by the stranger and his myrmidons.

It looked like a segment of the procession into the ark, and yet John's simile of Crusoe held better than ever, for the parrot had left the stranger's wrist and was sitting upon his shoulder. He was a fine handsome fellow, though his face, bronzed by a tropical sun, looked, by contrast with his long white beard, less like a copper kettle than the bottom of it after being exposed to the action of fire.

"Here's a gentleman who says he is your brother, Mr. Raeburn."

"Mark!" cried the stranger, opening his long arms, and looking earnestly at the attorney. "Dear Mark, don't you know me?"

Mr. Raeburn came hurriedly forward, and since the offer of his hand would evidently have fallen short of what was expected, yielded to his brother's embrace.

The absurdity of the scene was beyond description; for the attorney, quite unused to such a display of affection, was not only awkward in his accomplishment of it, but was evidently in mortal terror of the parrot, who, from his post on the stranger's shoulder, emitted a series of discordant shrieks, ending with, "Kiss and be friends! kiss and be friends! kiss and be friends! kiss and be friends!"

There was one thing, however, which, to my mind at least, invested the proceeding with pathos. The tall white-bearded man was shedding tears of joy.

"Thirty years ago, Mark; thirty years ago," reiterated he, in broken tones; "and yet that you should know me still."

"I knew you, Alec," answered the other, not without corresponding tones of emotion, "when you first got out of the fly."

"Well, that is so far satisfactory," observed Mrs. Raeburn, who had been regarding the scene with considerable impatience and contempt; "because, really, nowadays, there is no knowing who's who."

"God bless you, Alec, and welcome home," cried the attorney, hoarsely.

"Yes; welcome home to England,"

added Mrs. Raeburn, with some slight stress on the last two words. "You are come from abroad, of course; and in health and prosperity, I hope. Mark has often and often talked about you."

The visitor turned his face towards his hostess with a questioning look: then, after a little pause, exclaimed, "I do not doubt it, madam; though, if I did, I should still thank you for saying so. When we were lads, we were all in all to one another. Now, of course, it is different. He has his wife—what's her name, Mark?"

"Matilda."

"Let me salute you, Matilda." She stood like a graven image while her brother-in-law stepped up to her, parrot and all, and kissed her cheek; though, from the expression of that bird's countenance, I should not have been a whit surprised had he picked her eye out. "This is your son?"

"Yes; John," explained the attorney, absently, for the bull-dog was walking round and round his legs.

"And this your second?" continued the visitor, addressing me with the same genial smile that he had bestowed on my supposed brother. "Since your eldest son was not named after yourself, I can scarcely hope to find an Alexander in the family."

"He does not belong to the family at all," observed Mr. Raeburn.

"I am sorry for it," answered the visitor, drily; "he looks a frank young fellow enough. I trust, however, I have at all events a relation in this charming young lady."

Gertrude had entered the dining-room, unobserved, in the confusion, and was standing close behind me.

"If you are Mr. Alexander Raeburn, my father, Robert Floyd, was your first cousin," answered she, sweetly. "I remember to have heard my mother speak of you," she added, with a little blush.

"Are you Maggie Warden's daughter?" exclaimed the bearded man, with a tremor in his manly voice. "I ought to have known as much. Would you mind if an old man like me should ask to kiss you?"

"That's nice! that's nice! that's nice!" shouted the parrot, as its master suited the action to the word. "Kiss and be friends! kiss and be friends! kiss and be friends!"

"I hope we shall, Chicot; I am sure we shall," ejaculated the visitor, gravely. "God bless all in this house, and thanks be to Him that, after so many years, he has permitted me to come amongst them."

REMARKABLE ADVENTURERS.

CASANOVA.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II. UNDER THE LEADS.

STUDENTS of Hogarth will recollect that that great painter and greater moralist pitched upon Covent Garden as the scene of his famous "Morning." The stiff devotee is walking primly and demurely to matins, without deigning to perceive sundry roisterers in gay attire, who, after a night spent among the wine-pots, and enlivened by the rattle of the dice-box, have reeled out of Tom King's Coffee-house, and are playing "Meg's diversion" in the market. Their rich clothes are in disorder, their sumptuous ruffles and "jabots" crumpled and torn, their faces wan and sickly in the grey light of the winter sun. The ground is covered with snow, and on this pure surface the revellers stand out like foul blotches on the face of nature. Changing the venue from London to Venice, transposing summer for winter, and southern for northern manners, we stumble on a very similar scene by the shores of the Adriatic. It is a fine July morning, in the year of grace 1755. The first yellow streak of sunrise is gradually reddening into more perfect day. Slowly wending their silent way towards the Grand Canal are the fruit and vegetable boats, laden to the water's edge with cool greenery, gorgeous purple egg fruit, melons of every shape and size, and huge pumpkins, making up in show what they lack in flavour. Towards one spot, on the quay of the Grand Canal—the Erberia, the flower and fruit market—all this wealth of beauty is tending. As the boats arrive, their contents are flung in picturesque heaps by the peasants, whose cheeks of ruddy bronze contrast strangely with the greenish-yellow hue of fashionable visitors, for it is the fashion, in this year 1755, to take a stroll in the Erberia before going to bed, and to "assist" at the unlading of the fruit boats and the opening of the market. It is not good "ton" to look fresh and lively at this merry meeting. Ladies and gentlemen think it good style to air their haggard looks—after a night spent in dancing or dicing—among the flowers of the Erberia. Abbés, nobles, captains, more or less coppery in hue, professional gamblers, actresses, dancers, debauchees of every type, saunter listlessly among the verdure. It is an odd scene to look upon at sunrise. Not

so, however, does it seem to that tall dark-visaged cavalier of almost Moorish aspect who has just arrived. He has evidently been passing the night in brilliant company, for his costume is sumptuous in the extreme. His broad shoulders and long muscular limbs are encased in a suit of light-coloured taffety, profusely adorned with many an ell of silver lace. Truly a superb dandy this young Casanova, but yet ill at ease in his splendid raiment. Luck has been against him of late, and his once goodly pile of sequins has vanished. The last five hundred have vanished to-night, and the young rake is at his wits' end for ready cash. But this is not the worst. He has been advised by persons of prudence and authority to make himself scarce, as the air of Venice is not healthy for him, and he cannot quite make out these obscure hints. An empty pocket and an aching head oppress him sorely, as he paces moodily to and fro, scarcely heeding the beauties of nature and art by which he is surrounded.

Suddenly he turns away and makes briskly for his lodgings; and, thinking that nobody can be up at this early hour, applies his key to the door. Unnecessary trouble; the door is open, and the lock broken. Inside all is confusion, everybody is up, and the hostess complaining bitterly that the police functionary, known as Messer-grande, has entered the house by force, turned everything inside out and topsy-turvy, saying that he is looking for a certain box said to be filled with salt—a contraband article. The Signor Casanova's room has not been respected; in fact, has been subjected to a rigorous perquisition. Casanova vows vengeance and goes to bed, but cannot sleep, the loss of his last sequin and the mysterious police visit being too much for his nerves; and four hours later the adventurer, now seriously alarmed, betakes him to his protector, the old patrician Bragadino, whom he finds in company with his two inseparable friends. Casanova recounts the outrage on his dwelling, and insists that his landlady shall have ample reparation made her; but the three old gentlemen, who know the inner life of the Venetian police, shake their heads at their scamp of a protégé, and tell him to come again at dinner-time. With an appetite by no means improved, he again presents himself in this goodly company. There has been talk in Venice to-day of the odd association of our hero with three venerable old gentle-

men, perfectly respectable and infinitely devout. Venetian gossips cannot fathom this mysterious friendship. "Virtue," say they, "may be indulgent to Vice, but should hardly select it as an ally. There is only one solution possible—sorcery! The youngster is a wizard, and has bewitched the old patricians." An ugly word this "sorcery" in the domains where the Holy Office yet retains influence. Dinner over, the four oddly-assorted friends take counsel, and old Bragadino addresses his young scapegrace: "The box, my dear young friend, be it filled with salt or with gold, is but a pretext. It was thou whom they sought, beyond all doubt, thinking themselves sure to find thee. Since thy good genius has preserved thee thus far, be off, escape; to-morrow it may be too late. I have myself been for eight months inquisitor of state, and I know the kind of captures that the tribunal commands. They do not break down doors to find a box of salt. Mayhap—knowing thee to be out—they made a descent on purpose to give thee time to fly. Believe me, my dear son, fly instantly to Fucino, and thence to Florence, where thou canst remain till I write thee to return. If thou art without money, here are a hundred sequins to go on with. Think that prudence commands thee to depart." Blustering Casanova declares himself an innocent and injured lamb—guiltless of crime, and having, therefore, nothing to fear. The old man shakes his wig. "The redoubtable tribunal may think thee guilty of crimes—real or supposed—whereof it will render thee no account. Appeal to thy oracle, but depart." Good advice, entreaties, tears, all are in vain. Casanova goes to his lodgings. Night descends on the lagoons. It is the night of the 25th of July, 1755. The returning sun brings a terrible visitor—the redoubtable Messer-grande. "Are you Giacomo Casanova?" "Yes. I am the same." "Get up, dress, give up your papers." "From whom do you bring this order?" "From the tribunal."

Caught in the net, too confident Casanova! Books, papers, and desk open! "Take them," says the prisoner, with a cold feeling creeping over his heart. "Bound manuscripts. Where are they?" Too well informed messer-grande! Here they are, a pretty collection for a young sorcerer—as yet in a small way of business—the "Clavicula of Solomon," the "Zecor-ben," a "Picatrix," a "Treatise on the Planet-

ary Hours," and the incantations necessary for raising demons of every class, cruelly damnable just now! Messer-grande seizes upon these precious volumes, while his prisoner, in a species of dream, rises, shaves, and dresses mechanically, combs himself carefully, puts on a shirt of finest lace and the famous taffety coat, with the silver lace upon it, and goes forth among the archers dressed like a bridegroom. Messer-grande puts his prey into a gondola, takes him to his office, and locks him up, without a word—neither captor nor captive being conversationally given just now. Dull hours of waiting ensue; until, about three o'clock, the chief of the archers enters with an order to conduct the prisoner to the famous state prison of Venice—"Under the leads." Another silent journey in a gondola, through the smaller canals till the Grand Canal is reached, and the gloomy party descend at the quay of the prisons. Up and down they go over many stairs and through the closed bridge—the communication between the prisons and the doge's palace over the canal called Rio di Palazzo—through a gallery into a room occupied by one in the robe of a patrician. This noble gentleman looks keenly at the prisoner, and says, "It is he. Put him in the dépôt." The prisoner, still silent, follows the gaoler of the Piombi, armed with a mighty bunch of keys, up more stairs and through more galleries into a dirty but roomy garret, where the guardian, seizing an enormous key, opens a door lined with iron, pierced with a hole about nine inches in diameter, and orders the prisoner in, while the latter is attentively considering a machine fixed to the wall. The gaoler kindly explains, "When their excellencies order anybody to be strangled, he is seated on a stool and his neck adjusted to this collar, which is worked by a tourniquet till the patient renders up his soul to the Lord, for the confessor never quits him till he is dead." Casanova is locked in his cell; the gaoler asks if he wants anything to eat after the interesting description of the garotte; and the prisoner replies mechanically that he has not thought of such a thing.

It is a low-browed wretched room, barely six feet high, and some twelve feet square, lighted, after a fashion, by a grating two feet square, crossed by six iron bars, each an inch thick, making sixteen rectangular openings. A heavy beam cuts off a portion of the light. There is no bed, no table, no chair, no furniture in-

deed but a shelf. Venice is hot in July, so Casanova doffs his gorgeous mantle of poult-de-soie, his unhappy silken coat, and his hat, trimmed with Spanish point lace, and decked with a handsome white feather. The prisoner clings to the grating, shaking it with impotent rage, like a caged beast of prey, and strives to catch a breath of fresh air; until at last he sinks down, crushed by his misfortune, and neither speaks, thinks, nor moves for eight mortal hours of suffocation and despair.

The din of St. Mark's clock awakes him to life. Night has come, but with it neither bread nor meat, bed nor water. Has the man been flung into this den to die, to become food for the rats which skirmish so fearfully in the garret outside? He waits, waits, waits—three live-long hours. Still no sound but the clock of St. Mark remorselessly crashing the hour into his ears. Fury seizes upon him. He stamps, shrieks, howls, dashes himself against the cruel walls, rends his hands against the senseless bars. At last nature asserts her power, and the wretched captive sinks in a shapeless heap on the floor of his dungeon, and falls asleep. The inexorable clock strikes midnight, and the wearied man awakes suddenly. He puts out his hand into the darkness and grasps another, cold as ice. His hair stands on end. Is this the hand of the last tenant of this hideous chamber, the last victim of the garotte? It is only his other hand, deadened by the weight he has rested upon it!

Early morning brings the gaoler. "Have you had time to think what you would like to eat?" asks this grim functionary. Casanova, now calm, asks for soup, bouilli, roast meat, water, and wine, and be-thinks him that his effects may as well be brought to him. He takes a pencil, and writes for his clothes, his bed, table, chairs, mirrors, razors, books, paper, and pens. "Strike out," saith the gaoler, "books, paper, pens, mirrors, and razors; all this is forbidden fruit here, and give me money for your dinner." Three sequins survived in the pockets once well filled. One of these is handed to the gaoler, and about mid-day appear furniture and food. No knives and forks however, but simply an ivory spoon—cutting instruments being forbidden.

A dismal meal this first prison dinner. Dim light, stifling air, crushing burning heat, the summer sun pitching down vertically upon the leaden roof. Another

dreadful day, made more hideous by vermin, rats, and the crash of the eternal clock. Morning brings books, conceded by the mercy of the Signiory; not those asked for by the prisoner, but improving works selected for prisoners: "The Mystic City," by Sister Mary, of Agrada, and "The Adoration of the Sacred Heart," neither of them quite in Casanova's line of reading. They are better than nothing, however.

At the end of ten days the three sequins are exhausted, and the tribunal assign fifty sous a day for the prisoner's board; a sufficient sum for a man "under the leads" in the dog-days, almost roasted alive in his cell. Next come fever, the surgeon, convalescence, and weary days. No accusation, no trial, no news of the outer world—nothing but heat, vermin, and occasional fits of frantic fury, as week after week passes by, and the hope of deliverance grows ever fainter and fainter. Despair at last brings courage, and the desperate resolve to escape or perish becomes more and more clearly defined. Scheme after scheme is revolved in the busy brain, recalled to health by the cool breezes of winter; but, to make Casanova's plans intelligible, a few words of explanation are necessary.

The Piombi are no other than the garrets of the doge's palace, and it is from the large sheets of lead with which the roof is covered that they take their name. They are accessible either by the gates of the palace, by the building devoted to prisons, or by the covered bridge already mentioned—the Bridge of Sighs. The dungeons can only be reached, under ordinary circumstances, by passing through the hall where the inquisitors of state assemble. The secretary alone has the key, which he confides to the gaoler but once a day, in the early morning, to enable him to attend to the wants of the prisoners. This service is performed at daybreak, as at a later hour the archers passing to and fro would be seen by all those having business with the chiefs of the Council of Ten. This council meets every day in a contiguous hall called *Bussola*, which the archers are obliged to cross every time they go to the Piombi.

The prisons are under the roof of two sides of the palace: three on the west—in one of which unlucky Casanova is safely hived—and four on the east. The gutter on the western side descends to the court of the palace; the other, perpendicularly, upon the canal called *Rio di Palazzo*. On this side the cells are all lighted, and the

prisoners can stand upright; but on the west, enormous rafters partially shut out the light of day. The floor of Casanova's cell is actually just above the hall of the Inquisitors, where, as a rule, they meet at night after the sitting of the Council of Ten, of which the Three are members. Casanova is perfectly well aware of all these particulars, and thinks the only possible mode of escape is to bore through the floor of his cell, to let himself down into the Hall of the Inquisitors at the right moment—that is, say when it is empty—and to make off. This project is no easy one to carry out without weapons, tools, or money to bribe the archers. Nevertheless, the prisoner has taken heart, and, with rare strength of purpose and true Italian patience, goes to work. First of all, he persuades the gaoler to allow him one half-hour's walk every day in the garret adjoining his cell. In this place he finds—growing bolder and more inquisitive by degrees—great heaps of manuscripts, and under them articles most precious—a fire-shovel, some old candlesticks, tongs, &c., the relics of an ancient prisoner of condition; but what interests him most is a straight bolt, as thick as his thumb and at least a foot and a half long. Meanwhile, he has had inflicted upon him a gaol-mate, a companion whom he wishes "five fathoms under the Rialto." Once more alone, on the 1st of January, 1756, he receives a present from his patron, Bragadino—a fine dressing-gown, lined with fox-skin, and a bear-skin bag to sleep in; for, as the heat is unbearable in the summer, so is the cold merciless in the winter. He also obtains a more cheerful assortment of books and better treatment generally. First and foremost, he secures a block of marble from the adjoining garret, then pounces upon the bolt he has long since marked for his own, and now commences a patient course of toil in the hope of conquering freedom.

Taking his piece of black marble as a whetstone, he works on, day by day, to convert the formidable bolt into a spontoon, and gradually grinds the bolt down in eight facets of an inch and a half long, bringing it at last to a tolerably sharp point. His arms become stiff with this painful work and his hands covered with sores; but hope sustains him, and he surveys his bolt, converted into a powerful weapon, with pride and exultation. To hide this treasure is the first thought, and the arm-chair provides a

spot; the next is, to go to work with it and pierce the floor. Clear-headed Casanova has no doubt about his locality, and doubts nothing that—the floor once perforated—he can let himself down into the hall by his bedclothes torn into strips. Concealed under the table till the door is opened, he can then escape, or, if an archer should come in his way, the spontoon will remove him. But there is a terrible drawback to this scheme: the floor may be of any thickness, and how are the archers to be kept from sweeping with exasperating cleanliness under the bed? This difficulty must be approached with care, for fear of awaking suspicion. Dust, it presently appears, is a killing thing to Signor Casanova, bringing on fits of sneezing and bleedings of the nose, copious and serious. The doctor is called in, and affirms that these sweepings must not go on, as the patient's life might be sacrificed. The gaoler bows assent; and now, at last, the caged creature can begin to gnaw his bars. Long winter nights are against him, and his next idea is to construct a lamp. Things are now easier. Oil is obtained for salad, and flint for steeping in vinegar for the toothache. A wick is easily made, and a steel buckle will help the flint to produce a spark. Sulphur and tinder are still wanting; but a supple and ingenious mind, bent on one object, is not likely to want for these. The Signor Casanova is unwell, afflicted with irritation of the skin. Sulphur is wanted to make an unguent, and is supplied by the gaoler. Now for the tinder. Has the tailor done as he was commanded—put "amadou" (German tinder) under the arms of that taffety coat, to prevent the perspiration spoiling the silk? A nervous moment! Liberty may depend on the memory of a tailor. That careful workman has done as he was bid; the interior of the coat contains the precious sheet of "amadou." Sacrifice of the salad being made, the oil will suffice for a night's work, but as the Carnival has commenced, work must be deferred for fear of unwelcome companions. An unhappy Jew, thrust upon Casanova for a couple of months, delays his operations, and worries him nearly to death, but a few days after Easter he is alone again, and work commences in earnest. The bed removed and the lamp lighted, the prisoner lies flat on the floor, spontoon in hand, furnished with a napkin to collect the fragments as they are rent away. Digging down through the

flooring he patiently collects the bits, and flings them next day behind the heap of rubbish in the outer room. Like a gigantic rodent, Casanova nibbles away nightly at the massive planks, and at the end of three weeks has pierced a triple flooring. But now a serious obstacle interposes, in the form of a layer of the little pieces of marble known at Venice as terrazzo marmorin—the ordinary pavement of rich men's houses. The sharpened bolt will not bite on this material. The anxious workman toils patiently and painfully, nay, pours vinegar into the hole, in the hope of softening the stone à la Hannibal, and at last recollects that, by attacking the cement which joins the little pieces together, he will lighten his labour. Action follows thought quickly enough, and four days suffice to tear up the pavement, when another plank becomes visible—probably the last of its series. Meanwhile, time passes even under the leads, on which a midsummer sun again pours down his scorching rays. Stified with heat, and dripping with perspiration, the strong determined man lies flat on the ground, his cherished lamp by his side, his spontoon still at work, slowly gnawing through the net. One day he has a terrible fright. In the midst of his work he hears the grating of the bolt in the passage outside—a sound betokening an unwelcome visitor. There is barely time to blow out the light and drag the bed over the aperture, when the gaoler Lawrence introduces a companion in misfortune, an unhappy abbé, nearly suffocated by the heat and horrible stench of the cell, and frightened out of his life at the appearance of his companion, whom he at first takes for a maniac. Soon recognising him, however, the new prisoner tells the veteran the news of the town, to his infinite delight. In eight days the abbé is again at liberty, and Casanova flies back to work, now nibbling very tenderly at the last thickness of the plank. Piercing a small hole through, he claps his eye to it and sees, as he has expected, the chamber of the Inquisitors. A less welcome sight is a perpendicular surface some eight inches deep—what he has dreaded and expected all along—one of the huge beams which support the ceiling. This involves the extension of the opening on the opposite side, as the beam would prevent the passage of an athletic adventurer. Anxious moments now till the work is done and the small holes carefully closed up, lest

the light of the lamp should be seen from below. By the 23rd of August all is ready, and the 27th fixed upon for the attempt, but on the 25th comes a crushing blow.

At mid-day the bolts rattle and the gaoler enters with, "I wish you joy, sir, of the good news I bring you. Follow me." The first thought of the prisoner is of course of liberty.

"Give me time to dress," he cries, overcome with joy.

"There is no occasion for that, as you are only to be removed from this vile cell to another bright and new one, with two windows, out of which you will see half of Venice, and where you can stand upright."

Poor, patient prisoner, struck down as by a thunderbolt, sinks into a chair. His head swims round and round. "Give me some vinegar, and tell the secretary that I thank the tribunal for this favour, but that I pray I may be left where I am." This appeal is only laughed at by Lawrence; the fruit of months of labour is lost, and, worse than all, the hole in the floor will be discovered. In the midst of all this misery and disappointment there is one crumb of consolation—the spontoon, concealed in the arm-chair, is removed with it into the new quarters. There is a terrible uproar when the hole is discovered, and much seeking and poking among mattresses and cushions, but the precious weapon escapes notice. Nevertheless, nothing can be done with it. The new cell is perfectly fresh and clean, and would show the slightest scratch on its surface. Escape seems farther off than ever.

One day Casanova orders the gaoler to buy him the works of Maffei; but as that worthy comes in for any surplus that may be in hand at the end of the month, he is terribly averse to any extraordinary expenses, and suggests that other people in the prison have books, and that they might advantageously lend them to each other. The "Rationarium" of Petau is exchanged for the first volume of Wolf, and a correspondence is opened by means of the hollow backs of the vellum-bound books, which sit flat when the books are closed, but form a kind of pocket when it is opened. Backwards and forwards pass letters between the tenants of cells on the same perpendicular. Casanova finds that overhead are two occupants, one Father Balbi, of noble Venetian family, and a Count Andrew Aschino of Udine, a fat old man. Casanova writes with his finger-nail trimmed to a point, and dipped in mul-

berry-juice, the books themselves supply fly-leaves to be torn out, written over, and slipped into the hollow book-backs. One subject occupies the minds of all the prisoners—their escape; but the mind of the reverend father Balbi is more critical than inventive, and Casanova knows that he at least cannot go to work for a while. Nevertheless he informs the monk of the existence of his precious spontoon, and offers to convey it to him, if he will use it in making an opening through the ceiling of his own cell into the superior garret, and in cutting his way through the floor to Casanova, who then will answer for the success of the operation. His opinion of the discretion and skill of the reverend father is not very great, but the great adventurer must work with such tools as he has. He writes Balbi to provide himself beforehand with a couple of score of pictures of saints to cover over the damaged ceiling and floor. The difficulty now is to convey the working tool from one cell to the other. The wadded dressing-gown lined with fox fur is thought of, but abandoned; and at last, after severe cogitation, the true device is hit upon. Casanova compels the gaoler to buy him a new folio edition of the Vulgate, just out; the volume is brought—and he finds that the unhappy spontoon is just two inches longer than the book.

New difficulties and delays supervene, but the inventive brain of the magician is equal to the task. St. Michael's day is coming on, and a dish of macaroni and cheese would be a friendly gift from one prisoner to another. Lawrence, the gaoler, now says that the neighbour would be glad of the great book, which cost three sequins. "Good," says Casanova, "I will send it him with the macaroni; but bring me the biggest dish you have, for I like to do things well." The spontoon is wrapped in paper, and stowed in the back of the book, care being taken that it shall project only an inch on either side. If the macaroni dish be now only big enough to hide the book on which it is to be placed, the weapon will be transferred safely. By good fortune the dish is enormous. Casanova himself fills the dish with macaroni, seasons it deftly, and fills up the interstices with a copious dose of melted butter. Brimful, the dish will require all the steadiness of Lawrence to keep it from spilling over on to the valuable book, against which dire disaster he is duly cautioned. Lawrence grumbles

at the brimming dish, but carries it—book and all—safely to Balbi, who now goes to work. In a week he succeeds in making a hole of sufficient size in the ceiling, and in masking it with a saintly picture. This done, the monk works away, groaning much over the severity of the work, but encouraged by his correspondent, who assures him it is child's play. Taking more kindly to his work as he goes on, Balbi soon removes thirty-six bricks, and on the 16th of October, at ten o'clock in the morning, a slight tapping overhead assures Casanova that all is going on well. He has now no doubt that, with the help of a companion, he will in three or four hours bore a hole in the roof of the ducal palace, and place himself upon the leads instead of under them. All is ready for the attempt, when once more the bolts squeak, and the archers of the Seigniory again inflict upon Casanova a hideous visitor, at whose apparition thoughts of immediate flight vanish like a morning dream.

There seems to be no end to the ill-luck of the Signor Casanova!

GROETHODE'S LEATHER BREECHES.

A STORY OF THE CAPE POLICE.

"You want a horse to go to Alexandersfontein to-morrow? I don't think we can spare one, except Jumps. But, look here! our new inspector has borrowed the green cart, to look round camp on that side, and he may as well give you a lift."

We were at Bultfontein-house, on the South African Diamond Fields. I believe there are a score of mansions built at this time, compared with which the old Residence would seem a pretentious cow-house. But, when I knew it, we were desperately proud of our dwelling, and defied even the great New Rush, that marvellous pit of gems, to show its equal. Seldom then, and never now, I should suppose, did you ask for a horse in vain. But on this occasion, as the manager explained, I must either take a "cart in Dutoitspan Camp below, or share the inspector's vehicle, if I would shoot plovers for breakfast on the flats of Alexandersfontein." Of course, I chose to go somewhat out of my way, and thus came to hear the story which I propose to tell you.

At the hour conventionally known as daybreak in those early climes, we started. The faintest hue of grey overspread the

sky, and a man unused to African travelling would have thought it madness to drive over Bultfontein digging in such a light; but one learns there a fatalism beyond that of Turk or Fellah, and without an extra throb I lit the early pipe and took my seat behind the stalwart "boy," who had to pilot us amongst the "claims" of Bultfontein. At the bottom of the hill we stopped to pick up the inspector. I don't know why I should not name him, for my tale is true, every word, so far as memory serves me; but British custom is against the naming of names, and I will call the excellent fellow MacDavid, so that those who know may recognise.

MacDavid was a short, wiry man, such as recruiting sergeants love to enrol for the light cavalry. He had a face burnt red on cheeks and brow, almost black on temples. The grinding dust of the veldt had roughened it all over; a stiff black beard, dashed with grey, girdled it about; and his eyes had that steely brightness which I have always noticed in men who laugh and fight with equal heartiness. I know nothing of Inspector MacDavid's family or condition, for we never met, unless for a smile and a nod, after this occasion. But in the gallant corps to which he belonged, and belongs still, I trust—the Frontier Police—there are not a few privates who could, if they would, show their quarterings.

He took his seat beside me under the tilt of the "cart," and we bowled along behind a pair of the company's horses round the outskirts of the camp. The inspector kept his eyes about him, asking questions of this matter or that. I said, after a while:

"They say your men dislike this police work in camp?"

"Well," he answered, "it's not surprising; they didn't enlist for any such service. The proof of it is, that we are a mounted corps, and yet I have to borrow your friend's horses to take me round my beat. The men don't understand that it's just a temporary service: they call each other Bobby, and have a score of jokes. Our horses are eating their heads off in the big stable yonder. Isn't that a drinking-shop, under the tree?"

I explained how the tent in question was occupied by a man to whom all this land, and many a mile around, once belonged, and how the authorities dealt with him leniently. And then I said:

"Surely you men find excitement enough in camp? This place is not so peaceful as it was twelve months ago."

"Excitement?" repeated MacDavid. "It might be exciting for London peelers, but not for the frontier police; our fellows want it hot and strong, like "Cape Smoke" (Cape brandy). Half of them went through the Coranna war, and grumbled at that. Our proper business is to guard the frontier against those little imps of Bushmen, who are the natural enemies of the human race, white or black. A man who has campaigned with them is difficult to suit in a fight."

"But you haven't Coranna wars every year," I said, "nor even brushes with a Kaffir kraal. Come now, Mr. MacDavid, the frontier police are soldiers, of course, but they are policemen, too, and they catch even pickpockets sometimes upon the veldt."

"I don't know about pickpockets. They'd certainly catch any one they looked after; but our crimes don't run in that line. Horrors are done in this lonely veldt that beat all the fancy of civilisation."

We had skirted round the purlieus of Bultfontein, and once more struck the road which led me to my hunting-grounds. The sun was up. Each tall ant-hill beside the track threw its long blue shadow over the thin grass. No object more striking; neither tree, nor rock, nor water; broke the grey level. Wave beyond wave of colourless herbage the veldt stretched round, until it melted hazily beneath the flat-topped barren hills. The blue shadow of our rapid cart danced beside us. Could men, born in such a desert landscape—not Bedouins, but Christian men—conceive the crimes that we in Europe know? I had seen something of the boers, and had marvelled at their simplicity, whilst recognising that it was not always amiable. But they have no such passions, no such desires nor wants, as lead to crime with us. They know hunger but as a feeling of their black servants, greed of wealth only as a passion of those strange men who dig and dig for stones with which, a while ago, they plastered their mud cottages. Of love they are capable most certainly; but in its best, its sacred form. Of course I had heard stories. But MacDavid's tone seemed to suggest a sort of crime differing from that stolid and matter-of-fact immorality which Cape Town judges are sometimes called upon to punish.

"You have had some rough police work," I said.

"It was I arrested Groethode," he replied; adding, after an instant, "Perhaps

you've not heard of that man? But ask Mr. F—— up at the Residence, and he'll tell you stories to make your hair rise."

"I would rather hear yours," I answered.

And he told it me. No doubt I shall make some errors in transcribing it here, after four years have elapsed. I am not even certain that my ghastly hero's name was Groethode. But Cape readers will excuse me when they observe that I have at least got all my important facts correct, and of that I feel assured.

"I had served five years in the Eastern province," began MacDavid, "when I was transferred to the Colesberg district. They gave me a fortnight to report myself in, and I determined to ride the distance, crossing the Drakenburg mountains. On the fifth day out we rather lost ourselves, the Totty groom and I. After wandering for a few hours we came to a kloof—what they should call in England a cleft. You know the gap by Belmont, through which the road passes from this to Hopetown? It was just as lonely, just as grand as that, if you could fancy the valley before it was inhabited. And at the mouth stood a boer farmhouse."

MacDavid's comparison enabled me to realise the scene. I could paint the long desert flat, blazing with sunshine, and awirl with dust. Though called pasture land, it bears no grass. Rugged bush of heath, dwarf tufts of camomile, great bulbous roots of daphne, spring at six-inch intervals, and everywhere the sand shows red between. Above the dreary waste huge cliffs tower suddenly, rising from amidst a burnt heap of pebbles. Down below, brown and ragged spikes of herbage frizzle in the sun, but on the rock there is not foothold for a weed. Vultures lumber up to perch upon the cliff-tops; hawks swing and circle rapidly, their shadows flitting over the sand. On the little tufts of heath, lizards countless lie and bask. For miles and miles behind is grey desert; there is not a tree, not a break in the landscape; only hills on the far horizon, blue and misty at this distance, but, in fact, as hard and pitiless and baked as those in front.

And the boer farmhouse at entrance of the kloof! With an unconscious imitation these boers build to match the scenery; bare and colourless are their houses as the rocks above. The farmer steps from his rude front door and finds himself upon the veldt. He has no garden, nor does he want one, not even for vegetables. A half-dozen

peach trees, may be, green some sheltered corner of the kloof. Not a touch of paint, nor any ornament, sets off his house, inside or out. Days come and go therein, and bring no news. He has actually no knowledge of the world's affairs; months and years pass uncounted. The giant father becomes old and dies, but giant sons succeed. The girls do their courting at midnight, in the old Dutch fashion, with a lover who gallops in from twenty miles away. Presently they one by one announce the intention to get married, and their father gives them a few square miles of veldt for dowry; which, when the old man dies, his sons, if strong enough, will take away. The boer saves no money. His father left him twenty pounds, and that he leaves in turn. Never in life has he wanted anything, and his existence is a standing negation of this nineteenth century, whereof we are so proud.

All this passes through my mind as I recall MacDavid's story. The digression is not needless, but probably you think it long enough. He went on:

"In the house I found an old woman, who appeared, as I remembered afterwards, struck all of a heap by my appearance. I was in uniform. But she gave me coffee, of course, and said breakfast would be ready soon. There was a settle by the door, protected by a plank from the draught, and I sat down on it. After talking with the old woman for awhile I got drowsy, and so, I think, did she. You know how boers sleep, especially the women. It was very hot.

"Presently there was a clatter in the stoop, the door opened, and I jumped up. 'Take those crackers, and wash them!' said a gruff voice in Dutch. A big man, a giant, was standing in the middle of the room, with the leather breeches in his hand. The old woman made a movement, I suppose, for he turned suddenly, and looked me in the face. There was a stare in his eyes which your regular policeman would have recognised at once, I daresay, but it only seemed a strange look to me. I said something in Dutch, and he answered roughly, 'God has brought you, uncle!' going with that to the back room, where I saw a couple of Totty women cutting at a sheep. He threw the crackers into a corner, took the knife and hacked off three or four ribs, tearing them from the carcass, pitched them to the women, and came back, his hands all bloody."

"Was this Groethode?" I asked.

"The very man! A giant he was, a huge hill of flesh. His mother, that I'd been talking to, was every inch of six feet high, though stooped with age. Groethode measured nearly seven feet, if not quite. You know to what a monstrous height these boers run, but when the trial came he topped witnesses and jury by half a head. We sat down——"

"But what sort of face had he?"

"Oh, fair, you know, with a big rough beard all round, like the rest of them. Large blue eyes, looking wild, and a trick of moving his eyebrows up and down—what people would call a handsome man, but with a queer expression. I rather liked him. He had great spirits for a boer—indeed, I thought him rather drunk—slapping his mother on the back, and throwing the mutton-bones at his Totty women as fast as he cleaned them. He made me laugh a good deal, though he didn't laugh himself. I had never seen a boer like that, and I thought, if the Colesberg people should be as lively, I'd made a good exchange.

"When I came to have the police reports, a few days afterwards, I found that Groethode bore a most suspicious character, and that crime was rife in the country I very soon had evidence. First came news of a man and horse pitched headlong into a ravine; but when I got to investigate it, the thing resolved itself into a mere accident. Then, at a wedding feast, half a dozen guests were said to have been pounded like clay, but no complaints arrived, and even when I called to ask—silence! Just a common quarrel! After that happened a terrible affair, which I won't say much about, for there was a lady in it, who's living still. But no accusations! In fact, I found that terror—terror of what or of whom I could not quite make out—ruled the country. Every man of English blood in town kept on saying to me, 'It's Groethode! Will you have the veldt depopulated before you hang him?' I couldn't go to the club, nor to Martin's bar, but they put Groethode on my back. The boers, when in town, didn't say much, but they looked a lot. I got regularly vexed with Groethode.

"Perhaps he took alarm; anyway he set off for a hunting trip to the Transvaal, and we had peace for a matter of three months. There wasn't a report in all my district except of cattle-lifting, and that. But Groethode came back, and the row began again. I de-

clare that anyone who had eyes could see his return in the boers' looks. Whatever he'd done up yonder, it hadn't taken the devil out of him, and our doctor soon noticed the difference. I'd long since given up any doubts about Groethode, and no man on the country-side hated him as I did. The magistrate and I had many a talk, thinking how we could get evidence, for all the boers were as silent as mice. If anyone had told me then that I myself, at that moment, held damning proofs against him, I should have stared. But here we are at Alexandersfontein, and the plovers are walking about yonder like barn-door fowls with their legs painted."

"You see they're not impatient," I said. "Please finish your story."

"Well, there isn't much more. One evening I sat in Martin's bar, which is not exactly a bar, of course, but a sort of club. Martin put his head in at the door, and said, 'A word, captain!' That proved to be the word we had been wanting for seven years. He told me there were two tramping bricklayers in the public room, who had crossed from the Eastern province. Upon the way they had seen a skeleton, with clothes about it, lying under a cliff. Of course it was my business to make inquiries, and I sent for them. They proved to be Africans, and knew quite well where they had been, and what they had met with. I supposed the poor dead man to be one of those who perish every year upon the lonely veldt, unknown and unmissed. But as they went on with their tale, a thought struck me. I didn't say anything, but just brought them to a map. It was as I thought! The body lay in the kloof, beside Groethode's house. The men had stopped there for a drink of coffee. Lucky for them that he was not at home! The old woman pressed them to stay, and when she heard they had come up the kloof, wanted to—well, I don't wish to be uncharitable, but Cape smoke does no one any good, does it? and if those men happened to be teetotallers, so much the better for them, of course."

"I was never so excited after Kaffir or Bushman! The men had passed three days before, and what couldn't Groethode do in that time? I got a search-warrant from the magistrate, and started with six men long before daylight, taking one of the bricklayers along with us. Just after sunrise we reached the kloof, entering it on the farther side. Our guide led us straight, and we found the skeleton in a hollow,

amongst the pebbles, heaped against a cliff. Vultures and jackals had picked it clean, but they had not carried the clothing out of that hole. We found a jacket shapely enough, and the remains of a 'jumper' and long stockings. The boots had been too much for bird or beast, and they still hung to the skeleton feet. Of trousers there was no sign. I just drew up a report of the attitude in which the body lay, put the whole into a sack, and off we went again."

"We took the bones to our doctor first thing, and I went to breakfast. Ten minutes afterwards he ran across."

"That man's been murdered!" cries he.

"So I thought," I said, and went on with my breakfast. "How?" The doctor was a nervous man, and I wanted to cool him down.

"Slug shot!" he says, half sullenly.

"Where?" says I.

"Through the back! Round the top of the trousers."

"How long ago, do you think?"

"That poor fellow's breeches were spoilt before your time, I should think. Probably he has been two years in the kloof."

"I hadn't thought of it! I know it struck me like a bullet. Two years, mark you, two years before, within a day or two, Groethode had brought home crackers to be washed. And he had come from the veldt, where crackers don't grow, that ever I heard of. As it flashed upon me that the corpse was dressed, except for trousers, the case seemed to me clear as daylight, and I left the doctor there with my breakfast."

"It was no use moving the magistrate in a touch-and-go business like that. My men were tired. I ordered out a Kaffir groom, who would be more than a match for all the Hottentots about Groethode's farm, and started, with only the search-warrant in my pocket. Half a mile away I sent my boy back to fetch a Totty; they overtook me long before I reached the kloof. Towards four in the afternoon we got to the cottage, the door of which, as usual, stood open, and by the fire-place sat Frow Groethode. I asked pleasantly after her son, and learned that he had but returned that morning, and had gone away again afoot an hour before. With that I went through the house, and locked the door looking on the yard. The women were all inside. I posted my Kaffir boy to watch, and when the Totty had hobbled all the horses he

could find, brought him in to interpret. Five minutes sufficed to gather evidence enough to hang twenty men. Frow Groethode could do no more than cry—these big women are like that—but the Totties, if one had believed them, would have made out Groethode more fearful than an ogre, more devilish than the fiend himself. I brought them back to the only case we had, and they told me that he was wearing the crackers to this day, that his mother had washed and mended them. They knew all about that murder in the kloof, even to its details. The man was working at Filjie's (Villiers') near by, about fourteen miles off. Groethode found him picking peaches in the kloof, and told him to go home. When he turned, this incarnate devil shot him through the back, stripped off his leathern trousers, hid the body, and came to breakfast with me!

"Suddenly Smike ran in, and reported Groethode coming from the kloof. I went to the door and saw my man, still far away, trudging over the sand; his giant form loomed monstrous in the declining light. He carried something on his shoulder. Looking round for Smike, whose eyes were better than most telescopes, I saw Frow Groethode just grasping the ancient roer, with which, no doubt, so many foul deeds had been done. My men looked on carelessly, whilst the Totty servants grinned with all their lips. In one spring I disarmed the old woman, and she went moaning to the fireplace. Smike told me, at a glance, that the man approaching had a spade and pick across his shoulder. We had still ten minutes. I tied the black women, and gave them in charge to Moses, their countryman. Smike brought round two hobbled horses to the corner, where stood our own beasts, and saddled them. Then I gave Frow Groethode into his charge, and stepped out to meet her son."

"He knew me well enough, and cried, 'Heaven brings you, uncle!'

"'At last!' I said. 'Groethode, you are my prisoner!—Stand! If you come a step nearer, or an inch, I drop you as you dropped Filjie's man in the kloof!' He stood about twenty yards off. His eyebrows moved up and down like a wild beast's. But he said nothing.

"'Moses!' cried I, 'bring me the hobbled horses.' He brought my own and had to go back. Meanwhile, Groethode and I stood opposite each other. In the red light, his twisted face was horrible to look at, and his shadow stretched twenty

yards behind. Suddenly I saw Groethode's eyes move and fix. I glanced aside, and sprang back. Just in time. The old woman's bullet hummed past me, and raised the dust fifty yards beyond. Like a flash Groethode leaped forward, but my rifle covered him. He stopped at ten feet distance, and walked back at my command, whilst Smike held that terrible old woman.

"Then Moses brought up a horse, and Groethode mounted. The boys lifted up his mother, who was very feeble, and we set off, the dreariest cavalcade that ever crossed the veldt. There was a moon, luckily. It was near midnight when we reached the first house, and then I tried to have my prisoner handcuffed; but not a man would touch him. They stood round in their night clothes, pale as the moonlight, and Groethode looked down on them, grinning and working his brows. Not a man would touch him, and I dared not lay down my carbine. But they agreed to put the old woman, who was almost spent, to bed, and sent off a boy full gallop to fetch my police. I would not go farther. Three hours we sat in the saddle, glaring at each other, before the police came. He asked to dismount, but I wouldn't let him. It was the weariest guard I ever kept.

"The moon was nearly down, when we heard the gallop of my men across the misty veldt. They came nearer and nearer. I made up my mind for a bolt, but Groethode seemed much easier, observing how fearful they all were of him. I put my carbine within two inches of his arm, and swore I'd drive a bullet through it if he didn't submit to be handcuffed, and he knew I'd keep my word. So he bore it like a lamb, only when my sergeant, who was a big fellow, had done tying his legs beneath the horse, he just seemed to let his hands drop on him, and poor Thorpe went down like a bullock. We left him there and galloped home. A month afterwards Groethode was hanged, with eight murders sworn against him, and many another suspected."

"I hope you'll have no such captures to make on these fields," I said.

"I almost hope not; but you see, when a man thinks of adventures like that, life here seems a bit dull. What d'you think that incarnate devil's first crime was? He had a bit of a quarrel with a neighbour, so small a thing, that the man accepted a supje when they met along

the road. Groethode made him drunk, plastered his head with tar, and set it alight! He was not eighteen then! Good-bye, sir, and I wish you sport with the plovers!"

MANY ARROWS IN THE QUIVER.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II. MANY IN THE LONG RUN.

In the former article we narrated some of the stories (with a prudent reserve as to crediting the more startling among them) of multiple births; beginning with triplets, proceeding to quadruplets and quintuplets, and so advancing to higher numbers. Let us now turn to the cases in which a large number of children are added to a family in the course of several years, not subject to the unfavourable contingencies that affect multiply births.

A few years ago, when a family of twenty brothers and sisters was much talked about, a question was propounded, "Are there any well-authenticated examples of a father or a mother having had two dozen children or more?" Answers were forthcoming in great number, in Notes and Queries and other publications; and some of them are really surprising, as the reader will presently admit. There is reason to suppose that most of the statements are tolerably reliable.

The late Sir Robert Wigram is said to have had twenty-four youngsters; how many of them grew up to man's (or woman's) estate we do not know. A publican's wife at Chester, living twenty years ago, and possibly many years later, had had twenty-six children in sixteen years; among the births were, as may be guessed, many repetitions of twins. A member of the family of the late Earl St. Vincent was often spoken of as being the twenty-third among twenty-seven children born to the same mother; unless the lady's husband was a peer of the realm, perhaps we must not look for a verification of this in Burke, Lodge, or Debrett. In a curious collection of celebrated trials, one Colonel James Turner is mentioned as having said concerning his wife, who was involved in the same trial as himself, "She sat down, being somewhat fat and weary, poor heart! I have had twenty-seven children by her, fifteen sons and twelve daughters." The public journals, about the beginning of the present century, recorded the fact that a Mrs. Edwards, residing in the New Road, brought into the world her twenty-eighth

child; all the twenty-eight had been single births, and all the children lived several months, but she had never more than ten of them living at one time. In the time of George the Second, when marvellous recitals were more in vogue than in later times, one Mrs. Rogers, wife of a 'Change broker, was credited with being the mother of twenty-nine children, all of whom lived to be baptised.

We go beyond the twenties, and enter the region of the thirties. The death of Mrs. Agnes Milbourne was recorded in an old number of the Gentleman's Magazine. We are told that she was a hundred and six years old, and had had thirty children. Exactly the same number is credited to a woman in humble life, living in the White-chapel district, who died at an advanced age about twenty years ago; as Mrs. Berry she had had twenty-six children in twenty years (four times twins), all of whom survived infancy; after a widowhood of a few years she became Mrs. Taylor, and added four more to her progeny. The further statement may without difficulty be believed, if the narrative is true thus far, that she had a hundred and twenty-two descendants living at the time of her decease, of the second, third, and fourth generations. Thirty was also the number that answered to one mother, of whom twenty-three died before manhood or womanhood. And thirty in the case of a poor Essex wife, who, after having had fifteen boys, was disconcerted at the non-representation of her own sex—or her husband was disconcerted, we do not know which; the couple were, thereafter, gratified (if gratification it was) with fifteen girls. The parish register of a church at Marlborough contains an entry concerning John Jones, who died in 1743, after having had thirty-one children, all of whom lived to be baptised. Quite a bit of history is attached to the name of Oliver Minjan, whose wife, Amalberga, brought him twenty-one boys and ten girls. When the Emperor Charles the Fifth made his public entry into Ghent, as Count of Flanders, Minjan appeared at the head of his twenty-one sons, all dressed alike in uniform—probably some of them mere toddlers. The emperor, naturally interested in so unexampled a sight, settled a pension on the father. Sad, however, is the sequel of the story. All the children died of the dreadful plague known as the black death in 1526; and grief soon carried off the bereaved parents. The city

of Ghent contains a memorial relating to this most remarkable family. At Kirton-le-Moor, in Cumberland, a very unusual—perhaps unprecedented—family procession was witnessed towards the close of the last century: a man, his wife, and their thirty children walked to church, to be present at the christening of the thirty-first child. The Count of Abendsberg, when the Emperor Henry the Second of Germany was travelling through that country, presented to him his thirty-two children, as the most acceptable offer he could make to his sovereign. If many of the progeny were men of fighting age, the gift was so far welcome in those belligerent times; but whether the emperor really wanted the juveniles, we are not told. Returning again to England, we find a record that, in 1623 died Catherine, youngest of thirty-three children of William Tothil, a Devonshire man; she survived all the other thirty-two, and lived to a good old age. The Gentleman's Magazine of 1756 made short work of a long story:—"A woman in Vere-street, of the thirty-fifth child by one husband;" how many more were still to come, Sylvanus Urban did not venture to predict.

Beyond thirty-five? Tradition, more or less trustworthy, answers in the affirmative. About the year 1700 one Lady Elphinstone died, the mother of thirty-six bairns, of whom twenty-seven were living at one time. The late Bishop Bathurst, of Norwich, was the twenty-sixth child of Mr. Bathurst, youngest brother of the first Lord Bathurst. But this is only part of the story; for Mr. Bathurst, who had had twenty-two children by his first wife, was destined to have fourteen by his second, making a good round three dozen altogether. Rather distinguished in this way were the Bathursts; for two brothers and a sister of his had, during their respective married lives, sixty-four children, which, with his thirty-six, made just an even hundred. Another married couple, Thomas and Helen Urquhart, are ranked among those who have had thirty-six children. The parents lived at Cromarty Castle, in the early part of the sixteenth century; their twenty-five sons all grew up to manhood, and many of them became distinguished, while the eleven daughters all lived to be married, and many of them to be the mothers of large families. The Urquhart blood, therefore, must have been rather extensively diffused in Scotland by the end of the century. An authenticated case of

thirty-nine brothers and sisters was afforded by the Greenhill family, in the closing years of the seventeenth century. Thomas Greenhill, a surgeon, afterwards author of a treatise on the Art of Embalming, addressed in 1698 a memorial to the Duke of Norfolk, in his capacity as Earl Marshal of England: "That in consideration of your petitioner being the seventh son and thirty-ninth child of one father and mother, your Grace would be pleased to signalise it by some particular motto or augmentation in his coat of armour, to transmit to posterity so uncommon a thing." The College of Arms, or Heralds' College, of which the hereditary Earl Marshal is the official head, assented to the application of Thomas Greenhill, by granting an addition to the armorial bearings of the family. In the language of heraldry, which is not very intelligible to outsiders, the addition was in the form of "a demi-griffin, powdered with thirty-nine mullets."

Whether the reader's power of belief will allow him to follow us into the forties, or even beyond, everyone must decide for himself; but there are unquestionably recorded instances, whether well or ill founded. The parish register of Bermondsey contains an entry relating to James Harriott, under date 1625; he is described as having been one among forty children by the same father. Pennant, in his Tour in Wales, transcribes the following epitaph: "Here lyeth the body of Nicholas Hooker, of Conway, gent., who was the forty-first child of his father, William Hooker, by Alice his wife, and the father of twenty-seven children, 1637." This is pretty well; if Nicholas's forty brothers and sisters filled their quivers with arrows to anything like the same extent as himself, William's grandchildren must have been rather formidable in number, and the Principality somewhat in danger of being overpopulated. We go to the North of England, and find on a tombstone in Heydon churchyard, Yorkshire, an inscription to the effect that William Stratton, who was buried in 1734, at the age of ninety-seven, had had forty-five children, twenty-eight by his first wife and seventeen by her successor. Bayle records the fact that a French advocate of the sixteenth century—an advocate of water-drinking as well as of the law—was the father of forty-five children. The Americans tell of one David Wilson, of Madison, Indiana, who had been blessed with five wives and forty-seven children;

thirty-five of the progeny were living at one time—enough to stock a village in a newly-settled region. We are left to conjecture whether this was the same person as a negro witness at Detroit, who about twenty years ago stated that he had had five wives and forty-eight children, of whom twenty-eight were then living; if so, the arithmetic of the two stories does not quite tally.

Even if we overpass half a hundred, we still find averments claiming more or less attention. Lord Braybrooke has noted the fact that a Florentine noble, the Marchese Frescobaldi, possesses a portrait of an ancestress, Dionora Salviati, painted by Bronzino; underneath is an inscription, declaring that the lady had had fifty-two children, never less than three at a time, and on one occasion six at a birth! Whether Bronzino drew the long bow, or made an unintentional mistake, or told the veritable truth, who shall say? The *Collectanea Topographica*, in the Harleian collection, records that a weaver in Scotland had by one wife sixty-two children; that they all lived to be baptised; that forty-six sons lived to be men, but only four daughters lived to be women; that Mr. Delawell, a Northumbrian gentleman, rode thirty miles for the purpose of seeing the old couple, who at that time had none of their children living with them. Mr. Delawell, whose visit was made in the year 1630, learned that four Scottish gentlemen had undertaken to provide for forty of the children—ten each; and that most of the others had been similarly cared for. The *Gentleman's Magazine* is responsible for two marvels, which must be left to make their own impression on the mind of the reader—that in 1790 a man died who had had seventy-two children by two wives; and that a few years earlier died a husband whose first wife had brought him sixty-nine children, and the second eighteen!

In several of the above-recorded instances of large families (we confine ourselves to the best authenticated cases) the number of descendants living at one time is surprisingly large. In a foregoing paragraph has been mentioned the name of Mrs. Taylor; she had a hundred and twenty-two descendants living at the time of her decease. A narrative from Rheims tells that, among a family of eight brothers and fourteen sisters, one of the latter had had born to her twenty-six children, and was followed to the grave by a hundred and fifty-three children, grand-

children, and great-grandchildren, a few of them lame or blind old folks. Her numerous brothers and sisters had, like herself, such large families, that when she died, at the advanced age of a hundred and two, she had nearly a thousand nephews and nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces, &c. Another veteran whose name we have had occasion to mention, William Stratton, counted up two hundred and fifty-one descendants of the second, third, fourth, and fifth generations; he lived to see one of his grandchildren become a grandfather. This reminds us of a joke by one of our humorists, to the effect that an old man of seventy was seen crying by the roadside; on being asked the cause of his grief, he said that his father had been beating him; and the father corroborated the statement, adding, "The young rascal has been throwing stones at his grandfather!" But to proceed. One Yoland Baillie, a Parisian woman, who died about the middle of the seventeenth century, had at the time of her death two hundred and fifty-five direct descendants. A famous instance was that of Mrs. Honeywood, of Charing, in Kent. When this venerable matriarch died, in 1620, she had attained her ninety-third year; her children were sixteen in number; they had been blessed with a hundred and fourteen children, who had had two hundred and twenty-eight children, who had had nine children. Otherwise expressed, she lived to witness or hear of the births of three hundred and sixty-seven direct descendants—viz., sixteen sons and daughters, a hundred and fourteen grandchildren, two hundred and twenty-eight great-grandchildren, and nine great-great-grandchildren. One of her grandsons, Dean Honeywood, used to relate that he was once present at a dinner given by the old lady to a family party, comprising two hundred of her own descendants. In this instance all the accompanying circumstances tended towards the remarkable result—for she married at sixteen; she had sixteen children; she lived to celebrate the seventy-seventh anniversary of her wedding-day; and many of her descendants had large families, from eleven to twenty children each. She was followed to the grave by no fewer than three hundred and thirteen descendants. Not so well authenticated, perhaps, is the case of Lady Temple, of Stow, who died in 1656; although a statement is generally regarded as worthy of some reliance, when

found in Fuller's Worthies:—"Dame Hester Temple had four sons and nine daughters, which lived to be married; and so exceedingly multiplied, that this lady saw seven hundred descendants from her body." More details are necessary to render this statement satisfactory.

A regular poser—a clincher—is the case of an Irishman named Dennis, if true; if not true, the Annual Register must be held responsible. He died at Athenry in 1804, at the age of one hundred and seventeen; he had been married seven times, the last time at the age of ninety-three. He survived the births of forty-eight children, two hundred and thirty-six grandchildren, four hundred and forty-four great-grandchildren, and twenty-five great-great-grandchildren!

Without including so large a number of descendants living at one time, there have been instances of aged persons surviving a larger number of generations. Thus, Dr. Plot, in his Natural History of Staffordshire, mentions Old Mary Cooper, of King's Bromley, who lived to see the sixth generation, and could have said:—"Rise up, daughter, and go to thy daughter, for her daughter's daughter hath a daughter." This was either an imitation of, or suggested by, a statement made by Zuingerus, to the effect that a noble matron of the family of Dolburus, in the archbishopric of Mentz, could have thus spoken to her daughter: "Daughter, bid thy daughter tell her daughter that her daughter's little daughter is crying." Horace Walpole speaks of an ancient lady whom he visited, one Mrs. Godfrey; she had a daughter who had a daughter (Lady Waldegrave), who had a son (Lord Waldegrave), who had a daughter (Lady Harriet Beard), who had a daughter (Countess Dowager of Powis), who had a daughter (Lady Clive), who had an infant son! Horace Walpole saw all the eight generations at different periods of his life. The secret here was—early marriages, one after another.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Now isn't that charming?" said Mrs. Errington, finishing a paragraph descriptive of some brilliant evening party at which Algernon had been present, and looking round triumphantly at her audience.

"Very, indeed," said Minnie, who had been specially appealed to.

"Quite a graphic picture of the bow mong," said Miss Chubb. "I know all about that sort of society, so I can answer for the correctness of Algy's description."

Miss Chubb had the discretion to lower her voice as she made the latter remark, so that no one heard it save Mr. Warlock, and thus Mrs. Errington was not challenged to contradiction.

"How well Algernon writes," observed Mr. Diamond. "He has the trick of the thing so neatly, and puts out what he has to say so effectively! I wonder he has never thought of turning his pen to profit."

"My son, sir, has other views," returned Mrs. Errington, loftily. "But as to what you are pleased to call 'the trick of the thing,' I can assure you that literary talent is hereditary in our family. I don't know, my dear Minnie, whether you have happened to hear me mention it, but my great uncle by the mother's side was a most distinguished author."

"Really?"

"What did he write?" asked Miss Chubb, with much distinctness. But Mrs. Errington took no heed of the question. "And my own father's letters were considered models of style," she continued. "A large number of them are, I believe, still preserved in the family archives at Ancram Park."

"How did they come there?" asked Miss Chubb. "Unless he wrote letters to himself, they must have been scattered about here and there."

"They were collected after his death," Miss Chubb. You may not be aware, perhaps, that it is not an unfrequent custom to collect the correspondence of eminent men. It was done in the case of Walpole. And—Mr. Diamond will correct me if I am wrong—in that of the celebrated Persian gentleman, whose letters are so well known. Mirza was the name, I think?"

Miss Chubb felt herself on unsafe ground here, and did not venture farther.

"Well, at all events, Algernon appears to be getting on admirably in London," said the Reverend Peter, pacifically.

Minnie threw him an approving glance, for his good-natured words dispelled a little cloud on Miss Chubb's brow, and brought down Mrs. Errington from her high horse to the level of friendly sympathies. "Oh, he is getting on wonderfully, dear fellow!" said she.

"I'm sure we are all glad to hear of Algy's doing well, and being happy. He is such a nice, genial, unaffected creature! And never gave himself any airs!" said Miss Chubb, with a side-long toss of her head and a little unnecessary emphasis.

"Oh no, my dear. That sort of vulgar pretension is not found among folks who come of a real good ancient stock," replied Mrs. Errington, with superb complacency.

"And we are not to have the pleasure of seeing Algernon back among us this summer?" said Mr. Warlock. In general, he shrank from much conversation with Mrs. Errington, whom he found somewhat overwhelming; but he would have nerved himself to greater efforts than talking to that thick-skinned lady, for the sake of a kind look from Minnie Bodkin.

"Oh, impossible! Quite out of the question. He is sorry, of course. And I am sorry. But it would be cruel in him to desert poor dear Seely, when he is so anxious to have him with him all the summer!"

"Is there anything the matter with Lord Seely?" asked Minnie.

"N—no, my dear. Nothing but a little over-work. The mental strain of a man in his position is very severe, and he depends so on Algy! And so does dear Lady Seely. I ought almost to feel jealous. They say openly that they look on him quite as a son."

"It's a pity they haven't a daughter, isn't it?" said Miss Chubb.

Mrs. Errington did not catch the force of the hint. She answered, placidly, "They have an adopted daughter; a niece of my lord's, who is almost always with them."

"Oh, indeed," said Diamond, quickly. "I had not heard that!"

Mrs. Errington bestowed a stolid, china-blue stare on him before replying, "I dare-say not, sir."

The fact was that Mrs. Errington had not known it herself until quite recently; for Algernon, either mistrusting his mother's prudence, or for some other reason—had passed lightly over Castalia's name in his letters, and for some time had not even mentioned that she was an inmate of Lord Seely's house. In his latter letters he had spoken of Miss Kilfinane, but in terms purposely chosen to check, as far as possible, any match-making flights of fancy, which his mother might indulge in with reference to that lady.

"I am not sure, my dear," proceeded Mrs. Errington, turning to Minnie, "whether I have happened to mention it to you, but Castalia—the Honourable Castalia Kilfinane, only daughter of Lord Kauldkail—is staying with the dear Seelys. But as she is rather sickly, and not very young, she cannot, of course, be to them what Algy is."

"Oh! Not very young?" said Miss Chubb, in a tone of disappointment.

"Well, not very young, comparatively speaking, Miss Chubb. She might be considered young compared with you and me, I daresay."

Fortunately, perhaps, for the preservation of peace, much imperilled by this last speech of Mrs. Errington's, Dr. Bodkin and his wife here entered the drawing-room. Although it was May, and the temperature was mild for the season, a good fire blazed in the grate; and on the rug in front of it Dr. Bodkin, after saluting the assembled company, took up his accustomed station. Diamond rose, and stood leaning on the mantle-shelf, near to his chief (an action which Mrs. Errington viewed with disfavour, as indicating on the part of the second master at the Grammar School a too great ease, and absence of due subjection in the presence of his superiors), and the Reverend Peter and Miss Chubb drew their chairs nearer to the fireplace, thus bringing the scattered members of the party into a more sociable circle. The doctor was understood to object to his society being broken up into groups of two or three, and to prefer general conversation; which, indeed, afforded better opportunities for haranguing, and for looking at the company as a class brought up for examination, and, if needful, correction, according to the doctor's habit of mind. Only Rhoda remained at her window, apart from the others, and Doctor Bodkin, seeing her there, called to her to come nearer.

"What, little Primrose!" said the doctor, kindly. "Don't stay there looking at the moon. She is chillier and not so cosy as the coal fire. Draw the curtain, and shut her out, and come nearer to us all."

Rhoda obeyed, blushing deeply as she advanced within the range of the lamp-light, and looking so pretty and timid, that the doctor began smilingly to murmur into Diamond's ear something about "Hinnuleo similis, non sine vano aurarum et silas metu."

The doctor's prejudice against Rhoda had long been overcome, and she had grown to be a pet of his, in so far as so awful a personage as the doctor was capable of petting any one. To this result the conversion to orthodoxy of the Maxfield family may have contributed. But, possibly, Rhoda's regular attendance at St. Chad's might have been inefficacious to win the doctor's favour, good churchman though he was, without some assistance from her blooming complexion, soft hazel eyes, and graceful, winning manners.

The girl came forward bashfully into the circle around the fire, and nestled herself down on a low seat between Mrs. Errington and Mrs. Bodkin. A month ago her place in that drawing-room would have been beside Minnie's chair. But lately, by some subtle instinct, Rhoda had a little shrunk from her former intimacy with the young lady. She was sensitive enough to feel the existence of some unexpressed disapproval of herself in Minnie's mind.

"We have been hearing a letter of Algernon's, papa," said Minnie.

"Have you? have you?"

"Mrs. Errington has been kind enough to read it to us."

The doctor left his post of vantage on the hearth-rug for an instant, went to his daughter, and bending down kissed her on the forehead. "Pretty well, this evening, my darling?" said he. Minnie caught her father's hand as he was moving away again, and pressed it to her lips. "Thank God for you and mother," she whispered. Minnie was not given to demonstrations of tenderness, having been rather accustomed, like most idolised children, to accept her parents' anxious affection as she accepted her daily bread—that is to say, as a matter of course. But there was something in her heart now which made her keenly alive to the preciousness of that abounding and unselfish devotion.

"I think it is quite touching to see that father and daughter together," said Miss Chubb confidentially to her neighbour the curate. "So severe a man as the doctor is in general! Quite the churchman! Combined with the scholastic dignitary, you know. And yet, with Minnie, as gentle as a woman."

As to Mr. Warlock, the tears were in his eyes, and he unaffectedly wiped them away, answering Miss Chubb only by a nod.

"And what," said the doctor, when he had resumed his usual place, and his usual

manner, "what is the news from our young friend Algernon?"

Mrs. Errington began to recapitulate some of the items in her son's last letter—the "lords and ladies gay" whose society he frequented; the brilliant compliments that were paid him by word and deed; and the immense success which his talents and attractions met with everywhere.

"Yes; and Algernon is kindly received by other sorts and conditions of men besides the aristocracy of this realm," said Minnie, with a little ironical smile. "He has shone in evening receptions at Mrs. Machyn-Stubbs's, and sipped lawyer Leadbeater's port wine with appreciative gusto."

"He has to be civil to people, you know, my dear," said Mrs. Errington, smoothly. "It wouldn't do to neglect—a—persons, who mean to be attentive, merely because they are not quite in our own set."

"I trust not, indeed, madam!" exclaimed the doctor, with protruded lips and frowning brow. "It would be exceedingly impolitic in Algernon to turn away from proffered kindness. But I will not put the matter on that ground. I should be sorry to think that a youth who has been—I may say—formed and brought up under my tuition could be capable of ignoble and ungentlemanlike behaviour."

Mrs. Bodkin glanced a little apprehensively at Mrs. Errington after this explosion of the doctor's. But that descendant of all the Ancrams had not the slightest idea of being offended. She was smiling with much complacency, and answered mellifluously to the doctor's thunder, "Thank you, Dr. Bodkin. Now that is so nice in you, to appreciate Algy as you do! He is, and ever was, like his ancestors before him, the soul of gentlemanliness."

"Algernon was always most popular, I'm sure," said Miss Chubb. "He was a favourite with everybody. Such lively manners! And at home with all classes!"

"Yes," said Diamond in a low voice. "Superis Deorum gratus, et imis."

"Now what may that mean?" asked Miss Chubb, who had quick ears.

"The words were applied to a mythological personage of very flexible talents, madam," replied Diamond.

"Oh, mythological? Well, I never went very far into mythology. Now, it's a singular circumstance, which has often struck me, and perhaps some of you learned gentlemen may be able to explain it, that none of the studies in 'ology' ever seemed to have much attraction for me; whereas

the 'ographies' always interested me very much. There was geography, now. I used to know the names of all the European rivers when I was quite a child. And orthography and biography. We had a translation of Pluto's Lives at the rectory, and I was uncommonly fond of them. But, as to the 'ologies,' I frankly own that I know nothing about them."

The effect of this speech of Miss Chubb's was much heightened by the mute commentary of Dr. Bodkin's face during its utterance. When she came to Pluto's Lives, the scholastic eyes rolled round on Mr. Diamond and the curate with an expression of such helpless indignation, that the former was driven to blow his nose with violence, in order to smother an explosion of laughter. And even Mr. Warlock's sombre brow relaxed, and he ventured to steal a smiling glance at Minnie.

But Minnie did not return the glance. She had shaded her eyes with her hand, and was leaning back in her chair, unheeding the conversation that was going on around her.

"But now, really, you know, there must be some reason for these things, if philosophers could only find it out," pursued Miss Chubb, cheerfully. "Mustn't there, Minnie?"

"Eh? I beg your pardon!"

"Ok you naughty, absent girl! You have not heard a word I've been saying. I was merely remarking that——"

But at this point Dr. Bodkin's patience suddenly snapped. He found himself unable silently to endure a recapitulation of Miss Chubb's views as to the comparative attractions of the "ologies" and the "ographies;" and he abruptly demanded of his wife, in the magisterial tones which had often struck awe into the hearts of the lowest form, "Laura, are we not to have our rubber before midnight? Pray make up the table in the next room. There are—let me see!—Mrs. Errington, Miss Chubb, you will take a hand, Laura? We are just a quartet." And the doctor, giving his arm to Mrs. Errington, marched off to the whist-table.

On this occasion Mr. Warlock escaped being obliged to play. Indeed, the curate's assistance at whist was only called into requisition when a second table besides the doctor's had to be made up; for, although Dr. Bodkin co-operated very

comfortably with his curate in all church matters, he found himself not altogether able to do so at the green table, the Reverend Peter's notions of whist being confused and elementary. To be sure, Mrs. Bodkin was not a much better player than the curate; but then she offered the compensating advantage of enduring an unlimited amount of scolding—whether as partner or adversary—without resenting it.

So Diamond, and Warlock, and Minnie, and Rhoda remained in the big drawing-room when their elders had left it. Minnie had the lamp shaded, and the curtains opened, so that the full clear light of the climbing moon poured freely into the room. Warlock timidly drew near to Miss Bodkin's chair, and ventured to say a word or two now and then, to which he received answers so kind and gracious, that the poor fellow's heart swelled with gratitude, and perhaps with hope, for hope is very cunning and stealthy, and hides herself under all sorts of unlikely feelings.

Minnie had grown much more gentle and patient with the awkward, plain, rather dull curate of late. She listened to his talk and replied to it. And all the while she was taking eager cognisance, with eye and ear, of the two who sat side by side near the window, Diamond bending down to speak softly to Rhoda, and the girl's delicate face, white and sprite-like in the moonlight, turning now and then towards her companion with a pretty, languid gesture. Once or twice Rhoda laughed at something Diamond said to her. Her laugh was perhaps a little suggestive of silliness, but it was low, and musical, and rippling; and it was not too frequent.

Minnie sat with her hands clasped in her lap; and when she was carried to her own room that night, Jane exclaimed, as she removed her young mistress's ornaments, "Goodness, Miss Minnie, what have you done to yourself? Why that diamond ring you wear has made a desperate mark in your finger. It looks as if it had been driven right into the flesh, as hard as could be!"

Minnie held up her thin white hand to the light and looked at it strangely.

"Ah!" said she, "I must have pressed and twisted the ring about, unconsciously. I was thinking of something else."

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